United Nations S/PV.5929

Security Council

Sixty-third year

Provisional

5929th meeting

Tuesday, 8 July 2008, 10.30 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Le Luong Minh	(Viet Nam)
Members:	Belgium	Mr. Grauls
	Burkina Faso	Mr. Kafando
	China	Mr. Wang Guangya
	Costa Rica	Mr. Urbina
	Croatia	Mr. Jurica
	France	Mr. Ripert
	Indonesia	Mr. Natalegawa
	Italy	Mr. Mantovani
	Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Mr. Dabbashi
	Panama	Mr. Arias
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	South Africa	Mr. Kumalo
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir John Sawers
	United States of America	Mr. Khalilzad

Agenda

Peace and security in Africa

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08-41390 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Expression of thanks to the retiring President

The President: As this is the first meeting of the Security Council for the month of July 2008, I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute, on behalf of the Council, to Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations, for his service as President of the Security Council for the month of June 2008. I am sure I speak for all members of the Council in expressing deep appreciation to Ambassador Khalilzad for the great diplomatic skill with which he conducted the Council's business last month.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Peace and security in Africa

The President: The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by the Deputy Secretary-General, Mrs. Asha-Rose Migiro, to whom I give the floor.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I would like to thank Council members for this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in Zimbabwe.

I have just returned from the African Union summit in Sharm el-Sheikh, where I conveyed to leaders the Secretary-General's message that the crisis in Zimbabwe represents a moment of truth for democracy on the continent. Today, I would like to convey to the Council that the Zimbabwe issue also poses a challenge to the world.

When an election is conducted in an atmosphere of fear and violence, its outcome cannot have a legitimacy that is built on the will of the people. Consequently, the principle of democracy is at stake. Zimbabwe's flawed elections produced illegitimate results. The seriousness of the situation and its possible consequences have the potential to effect regional peace and security in profound ways.

Since the last briefing to the Security Council on this question, by Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe (see S/PV.5919), Zimbabwe held a presidential election with only one contender, incumbent President Robert Mugabe, who sought his sixth term in office. The Council will recall that Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai had been declared the winner, with 47.9 per cent of the vote. As Council members are aware, that result was not enough to avoid a run-off. Mr. Tsvangirai withdrew from the run-off, arguing that State-sponsored violence, intimidation and the killing of over 80 of his supporters made free and fair elections impossible.

Despite calls for the election to be postponed until proper conditions were in place, including by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, second-round elections were held on Friday, 27 June. Unlike in the first round, this time there were no national observers on the ground, as both the Zimbabwe Election Support Network, which had covered the first round in a very efficient manner, and the non-governmental organization Lawyers for Human Rights withdrew, citing the lack of minimal conditions to operate.

The lack of national observation stripped the elections of a critical measure of transparency and credibility. However, missions from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the African Union and the Pan-African Parliament were present on the ground. Anticipating increased tensions in the second round, the regional groups had substantially augmented the number of observers for the second round. SADC more than doubled its contingent, deploying over 400 observers, compared to 163 in the first round. The African Union deployed over 60 observers, compared to just under 20 in the first round, and the Pan-African Parliament deployed 30. The United Nations provided logistic and technical support to SADC efforts to increase observation in the second round. The observers included parliamentarians of both the ruling and opposition parties, members of civil society and civil servants. I would like to say a word of appreciation for the work of those observers, many of whom were themselves intimidated and harassed in the conduct of their duties and showed commendable courage.

On election day, observers reported many irregularities. A serious example is that voters were required to report the serial number of their ballots to Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) officials, rendering the concept of anonymous voting utterly meaningless. Some people

spoiled their ballots in protest; spoiled ballots accounted for 5.1 per cent of the total votes. Voting took place on 27 June, and official results stated that President Mugabe had won with 85.5 per cent of the votes. He was inaugurated on 29 June and subsequently travelled to Egypt to participate in the African Union summit.

It is of note that the three African observer missions present on the ground issued unequivocal condemnations of the electoral process and its results. The Pan-African Parliament observer mission stated that "these elections were not free and fair", and that "Conditions should be put in place for the holding of free, fair and credible elections as soon as possible, in line with the African Union declaration on the principles governing democratic elections".

The SADC mission stated that the process leading up to the presidential run-off elections did not conform to its principles and guidelines governing democratic elections. In addition, it stated that the election did not represent the will of the people of Zimbabwe. Finally, the African Union observer mission also concluded that the election process fell short of the accepted African Union standards, citing the violence in the run-up to the elections and the lack of access to the media.

Those observations clearly indicate that the electoral process leading to the declared re-election of President Mugabe was seriously flawed. This profound crisis of legitimacy is further compounded by the paralysis of State institutions. There is currently no functioning parliament. Civil society has been silenced and intimidated. The economy is crippled, with annual inflation reaching 10.5 million per cent by the end of June and unemployment being over 80 per cent, and severe shortages of food and basic services exist. There is an urgent need to restore the rule of law and to start building public institutions.

It is clear that Zimbabwe will have to go through a political transition, bringing together its people around a common project. It will also need a process of national healing and reconciliation, which should include wide-ranging and participatory national consultations.

Recognizing that the country is deeply divided and that the political future of Zimbabwe depends on a transitional arrangement promoting national unity, both ZANU-PF and the MDC have accepted a dialogue towards a negotiated settlement. Talks are ongoing under South African mediation to press for an urgent solution to the current political impasse. President Mbeki has been actively consulting with the concerned parties and is reported to be working towards a direct meeting between President Mugabe and the MDC leader, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai.

In my meetings with the African Union Commission Chairperson, Mr. Jean Ping, and other African leaders, some of whom expressed their fear that the situation would deteriorate further, I expressed my appreciation for their efforts thus far and my hope that they would remain fully engaged in helping the people of Zimbabwe. The creation of a government of national unity as a way forward enjoys broad support in the region. In its declaration, the African Union called for SADC efforts to be continued and strengthened by the establishment of a mechanism on the ground to support the mediation efforts. The Secretary-General strongly supports that recommendation and calls for the speedy establishment of such a mechanism. I also reiterated the Secretary-General's offer to put all the means at the disposal of the United Nations at the service of SADC and the African Union to strengthen the mediation process.

While the willingness of the parties to talk is encouraging, the Secretary-General remains gravely concerned that the situation could deteriorate further, with violence spreading across the country and its effects spilling over into the region. Secretary-General Ban also remains very concerned about the humanitarian situation in the country. If it is not attended to, the food shortage could leave 5.1 million people at great risk.

The Secretary-General therefore calls on the authorities in Zimbabwe to immediately lift restrictions on humanitarian activities. He also urges them to offer immediate protection to people currently located at the Ruwa transit centre, who were relocated from the South African embassy, where they had taken refuge.

As the world mobilizes to support a peaceful solution to the crisis and to help Zimbabwe back on the path towards democracy, stability and development, it is the urgent responsibility of the Government of Zimbabwe to protect its citizens and to cease immediately all forms of violence. The victims of the violence experienced in the past weeks deserve justice. Those who perpetrate crimes must be held to account. The United Nations stands ready to play its part in supporting such a process.

The President: I thank the Deputy Secretary-General for her briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on this subject.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.